

On July 9th, I received notice of the termination of my employment with The Connecticut Port Authority from Evan Matthews, the Executive Director, and Diane Wolff who was hired by Matthews as a Human Resource consultant. The letter I received raised largely unspecified concerns regarding my performance and conduct. The only specific item cited was alleged "...failure to adequately implement, maintain, and manage certain financial management practices and protocols. . ." The letter also claimed that these concerns had been discussed with me. Each of these contentions is false.

First, the Authority did not raise concerns regarding these subjects with me. When my counsel asked for a copy of my personnel file, it contained no documentation of these concerns, other than a written warning from 2018, which I declined to sign because it falsely recited an interaction I had with Mr. Matthews concerning his Authority-issued debit card while he was on official business at a tradeshow in Houston with Andrew Lavigne. When the account was opened a limit of \$1,500 per day was put on the card by the bank. On the day in question, Matthews had spent the limit of \$1,500 which largely included charges for food and beverages. He was upset that he was not able to place additional charges on the card. The written warning did not accurately describe the events and I therefore declined to sign it. My file was devoid of any other documentation of concerns regarding my performance or conduct or any discussion of these subjects with me. Further, I did not fail to adequately implement, maintain and manage certain financial management practices and protocols as alleged.

I had financial training and experience before I was hired. I know how to use Quick Books, but never used it at the Authority. When the Authority started to use the state financial system, CORE, among other duties, I ran payroll reports and authorized payroll for Mr. Matthews, Mr. Lavigne and Cassandra Berthiaume, the Fiscal Administrative Assistant. Mr. Matthews took that responsibility away from me in June 2019, when he took me out of any role in the Authority's finances. It's interesting to note that Ms. Berthiaume stopped speaking to me or the other person in my office a few months before that; right after my disagreement with Ms. Bonnie Reemsnyder, the Chair of the Board's Finance Committee, at a finance committee meeting about the Authority using Quick Books. At that particular meeting Ms. Berthiaume gave the Finance Committee copies of proposals from a few software companies that she spoke with in order to "build an accounting program" for her which would cost thousands of dollars just to set up. I disagreed and thought the Authority should use Quick Books. Ms. Berthiaume and Ms. Reemsnyder said that Quick Books was not secure.

When I was hired, the Authority was using a bank that board member Ms. Reemsnyder referred the Authority to. I paid bills through the bank's online ACH corporate system. In my opinion, this was not working well for the Authority, so I opened an account at a local bank. I also worked with the State Comptroller's Office and Treasurer's Office with regard to our Bonding projects at the Authority. I was never permitted to have any meaningful role in the development of financial practices or protocols at the Authority. These came from the Authority's legal representatives, Robinson and Cole. I received drafts of financial policies and procedures from Robinson and Cole, which I was to pass on to Mr. Matthews and also to Ms. Reemsnyder. These policies & procedures, I was told, should be considered by the Finance Committee and further recommended to the full Board for adoption. These policies were on the Finance Committee agenda, but they never reached the Board, and the Finance Committee never implemented policies or procedures governing financial matters. The Finance Committee also never reviewed bank statements or debit card statements of the Authority. I had no meaningful discretion or judgment with respect to financial items, all of which were overseen by Mr. Matthews. Ms. Berthiaume, whom I supervised, only knew how to run Excel spreadsheets. She had no experience with accounting programs that was made known to me. When I suggested that the Authority hire a certified public accounting firm to review the books on a quarterly basis and train her in Quick Books, Mr. Matthews rejected my recommendation.

In August 2018, Mr. Matthews prepared an annual performance appraisal regarding my work as office manager and receptionist. He rated my work as good in all elements. I never saw this appraisal until my attorney obtained my personnel file.

In early September 2018, I received a new position description from Robinson and Cole with additional duties, and a significant salary increase which I negotiated with Mr. Matthews. The salary increase was retroactive to August 17, 2018. If my performance was inadequate or my conduct was inappropriate, why would I have received this raise and this new set of job responsibilities?

In June of this year I was informed by Ms. Wolff and Mr. Matthews that my duties were revised. They informed me by handing me a new job description without explanation. Specifically, I was advised that finance and supervisory responsibilities would be removed from my job description. Mr. Matthews told me that he was going to take a management course and it was approved by Scott Bates and that he would be supervising Ms. Berthiaume and overseeing Finance.

When Mr. Matthews and Ms. Wolff met with me briefly in early July to advise me of the termination of my employment, Mr. Matthews told me that the real reason I was being terminated was that Ms. Reemsnyder was dissatisfied with the results of a draft audit of the Authority's books and records performed by the Authority's auditors, Blum Shapiro. I was told that she said it was "unacceptable" and that he and she decided that I should be terminated. I was not in any way responsible for the deficiencies cited in that report. I was not even working for the Port Authority for the first few months covered by that audit.

I never saw receipts for Mr. Matthews' expenses as he was not giving them to me anymore, because I always questioned him. Instead he gave them directly to Ms. Berthiaume who did not question him at all and who knew what he was doing. I had discussed this with her several times.

Mr. Bates essentially ran the Authority. For the most part, Mr. Matthews did not make any decisions; instead, he took his direction from Mr. Bates. If anyone else needed to have contact with Mr. Bates from the office, they had to go through Mr. Lavigne whom Mr. Bates arranged for the Authority to hire-first as a consultant, then a full time employee. Mr. Lavigne, for the most part, wrote his own job description (Business Development and Special Projects) and was hired at the top of the salary range indicated for the position, \$94,000. As far as I could tell, he had no relevant job experience. I understood that he knew Mr. Bates when both worked in the Washington, D. C. area. Mr. Lavigne and Mr. Matthews had many lunches, dinners and drinks which were paid for with the Authority's credit card. Mr. Matthews would say it was "business development."

Mr. Matthews and Mr. Lavigne attended tradeshow around the United States. Mr. Matthews attended a Steele conference in Tampa, Florida where his sister resides.

Mr. Matthews declined to use the Authority's automobile for business travel. Instead, he used his vehicle and Ms. Berthiaume submitted requests for mileage reimbursements to Ms. Reemsnyder. She approved these requests for reimbursement of Mr. Matthews' expenses. He was reimbursed approximately \$400 - \$600 every month. Mr. Lavigne also did not use the Authority's vehicle when he could have. Mr. Matthews signed off on his mileage requests.

Mr. Lavigne uses his personal cell phone for Authority business.

Mr. Matthews hired Libby Slater from Rhode Island who is a friend of his wife, to decorate the Authority's original office at the cost of over \$40,000. I did the same work for the second office across the hall, which was the same size, for less than half of that cost. He tried to involve Ms. Slater in that project, but I didn't use her.

The second office which was across the hall was not a wise decision in my opinion. He essentially "divided" the employees. Mr. Matthews was in the second office more than he was in his own office. He was "working from home" many Fridays. He rarely came into the office before 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. He traveled from Rhode Island and said many times that neither he nor his wife had any intention of moving to Connecticut.

I was not the source of information which triggered the audit of the Authority by the state auditors.

After I was let go, the Authority offered me severance pay of \$5,000, if I would sign a confidential severance agreement and general release of claims. My attorney and an attorney for the Authority from Robinson and Cole discussed the terms of this agreement on a number of occasions, but ultimately we were unable to reach agreement. The initial draft of the agreement required that I agree to say nothing negative about the Authority, its officers, officials, directors or employees, the services or programs provided or to be provided by the Authority, the business affairs, operation, management or financial condition of the Authority, or the circumstances surrounding my employment and/or separation of employment from the organization. The only exception was if I was testifying truthfully in court or before an administrative agency. Counsel for the parties continued to negotiate regarding this and other terms of the agreement, but the last draft contained new language regarding negative comments which made clear that the Authority's principal focus was preventing me from discussing anything with the media. The last draft of the agreement contained the following language on this subject:

"[y]ou agree not to make disparaging, critical or otherwise detrimental comments to any person or entity that is involved in the press or media of any kind, that you know or reasonably know is involved in the press or media, or that you know is reasonably calculated to lead to involvement or communication by the press or media concerning the (Authority), its officers, officials, directors or employees; the services or programs provided or to be provided by the (Authority); the business affairs, operation, management or the financial condition of the (Authority); or the circumstances surrounding your employment and/or separation of employment from the (Authority), except if testifying truthfully under oath pursuant to any lawful court order or subpoena or otherwise responding to or providing disclosures required by law."

I refused to agree to this language for several reasons. First, not only did the Authority take away my livelihood, the Authority damaged my personal and professional reputation by terminating my employment without explanation, amidst the controversy swirling around the Authority, while it maintained Mr. Matthews on paid leave. I was concerned that this would lead members of the public and potential employers to infer that I had done something wrong, which I know is untrue. I am very concerned that the adverse publicity that the Authority's actions have generated will greatly exacerbate the already difficult task I face in finding new employment as an older, single woman. Second, I felt the need to be free to talk to federal or state officials investigating activities of the Authority if they asked to speak with me, without requiring service of a subpoena or other legal process. In addition, I wanted to be free to discuss what had truthfully occurred with members of my family, friends, other members of my community, and potential employers so I could clear my name. The Authority refused to allow me this latitude. It also declined to make any reciprocal promise not to speak negatively of me. Because I refused to sign the proposed agreement under these circumstances, the parties' negotiations broke down.

I am willing to speak to any state or federal entity conducting an investigation into the activities of the Authority upon request. I do not intend to comment further on these matters in the media. I have issued this statement to make clear that I have done nothing wrong, did not deserve to lose my job, and welcome a full and transparent investigation of events at the Authority, including the termination of my employment.